

SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING

Public education and awareness-building was the central theme for Amherst's solid waste and recycling program in FY 07.

Amherst received resources from two grants: \$3,255 was awarded by the Springfield Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) Advisory Board for container-recycling awareness promotion; and a number of items were received from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Municipal Waste Reduction Grant.

The MRF mini-grant funded a series of drink bottle-recycling awareness advertisements in the Amherst Bulletin in May and June, a two-month advertisement on www.amherstbulletin.com, printing of 100 color "Bottle Battle" posters and 150 recycling awareness stickers, and special lids for 12 public area recycling containers.

The MRF grant enabled a Town-wide art recycling contest for elementary school students, which generated art work for a business recycling recognition sticker. The round, full-color sticker reads "Amherst First – Support a Recycler." It will be given to Amherst businesses with active recycling programs for placement on front windows or doors. The grant and the "Bottle Battle" concept was also the catalyst for a public service announcement on WRSI radio station and a 4th of July Parade entry.

Other new public education efforts included: the first Town-wide elementary school "Trash Free Lunch Day," a collaboration with Chartwells, the food service organization which holds the school lunch contract with Amherst Regional Schools; a new enhanced recycling website (www.amherstma.com/recycling) containing all the material from the 2006 Amherst Recyclopedia; participation in the 2006 Amherst Sustainable Energy Fair; increased communication with Amherst Regional School teachers about recycling and environmentally related student opportunities; recycling and waste-related presentations at Amherst elementary schools; and participation in the Hitchcock Center's Science Saturday's program for young children.

The DEP grant provided 20 rain barrel discounts to Amherst residents, several recycling videos and brochures about environmental resources for Amherst school teachers, a "Working with the Media" outreach toolkit, 50 water conservation kits (which include items such as faucet aerators and garden hose spray nozzles). The grant also provided six steel, cage-style public-area recycling bins which will be used for large public events on the Common, and a single lightweight plastic collection container for smaller public events.

The food composting program in Amherst public schools remains a challenge. During the summer of 2006, "Compost it!", an educational video for Amherst elementary school students, was produced by a parent volunteer. Copies of the short video featuring local children were given to Amherst's four elementary schools in August for classroom and cafeteria viewing. Several parents volunteered to serve as Compost Coaches in school cafeterias for several days, celebrating, encouraging, and instructing students in the composting effort. Despite these efforts, plastic contamination (Styrofoam containers and plastic utensils) in school compost remained high. In January 2007, compost collection at the high school and two elementary schools was halted. The composting program now is active at two elementary schools. School

districts in the region with successful composting programs either prohibit use of plastic and Styrofoam serve ware in their Cafeteria, or have outside funding sources with which to purchase compostable serve ware. It is believed that school composting success in Amherst depends on the existence of an alternative composting facility willing to accept the level of plastic contamination found in our compost, or the prohibition of plastic serve ware use in school cafeterias in future school lunch management contracts.

An audit of the “Sharps” collection program found five-quart collection containers far more popular than the one-quart size. This indicates that *individual* needle users are not using the program as originally anticipated. In FY 07 the medical waste hauler destroyed 48.8 pounds of Sharps collected by Amherst’s Health Department and transfer station. Plans are underway to analyze and enhance the Sharps program next year.

Curbside pickup of trash and recyclables in Amherst continues to be provided by private trash haulers; however, households requesting variances are allowed to bring their recycling and trash directly to the transfer station in pre-paid bags. This fiscal year, 400 households received variances to Pay as You Throw (PAYT), eliminating their need for a private hauler.

Earth Machine composting units, kitchen counter compost pails and recycling bins continue to be available for purchase at the transfer station. Rain barrel purchases and MA DEP-sponsored rain barrel discounts were offered to Amherst residents in early spring and distributed in April from the DPW parking lot on Route 116.

The Recycling Center and Transfer Station supports many programs to divert materials from landfill disposal. The following items are accepted at no charge from residents with current vehicle stickers:

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| clothing (goes to Salvation Army) | printer cartridges |
| automotive and rechargeable batteries | mixed containers |
| waste automotive oil | mixed paper |
| leaves & grass clippings | mercury-bearing items such as |
| Christmas trees | thermometers & thermostats |

The Take-It-or-Leave-It and Book sheds, which allow vehicle sticker owners to swap books and household items, remain popular, although parking becomes problematic when visitors linger at the two sheds.

The option to donate bottles with return deposits to the local food bank continues with a designated bin. Fluorescent bulbs, brush, electronics, household solid waste (bulky items), construction/demolition waste, scrap metal, asphalt, bricks, concrete, wood, paint, tires, appliances and propane tanks are all accepted for recycling/disposal after payment of fees.

Two household hazardous waste (HHW) collection days were held in the fall (2006) and spring (2007). Types and quantities of materials recycled via the Transfer Station over a four-year period are shown in the table below. The FY 06 spike in collected paint is due to a paint collection change at the end of FY 05.

	FY 04	FY 05	FY 06	FY 07
Chipped Brush/Leaves (tons)	397	62	34	XXX
Electronics (tons)	17	22	31	32
Scrap Metal (tons)	194	209	242	216
HHW in household equivalents	210	183	116	130
Paint (gallons)*	996	1,079	2,119	1,854
Tires (count)	636	678	559	757
Appliances	543	705	870	854
Propane Tanks	220	247	106	139

* Oil-based paint and paint products known to contain lead are only accepted during HHW collection days.

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